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ABSTRACT

In response to a statewide need for locally-directed evaluation, the State of Illinois funded a locally-directed evaluation project. Developed by personnel from the University of Illinois and Northern Illinois University, this project was directed toward devising and delivering information and assistance to local education agencies (LEA's) to help improve program evaluation efforts. Project objectives were to: (1) identify local and state information needs, (2) develop eclectic evaluation strategies which meet the needs of local and state agencies, (3) field-test strategies in selected LEA's, and (4) disseminate selected locally-directed evaluation strategies to key administrators in LEA's via workshops. (Author)

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DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TEST

OF

STRATEGIES FOR LOCALLY-DIRECTED EVALUATION OF CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Report of a project funded in total and coordinated by the Illinois Division of Vocational and Technical Education.

A paper prepared for and presented at the American Educational Research Association Convention, Chicago, April 17, 1974.

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RATIONALE

Within the past century over 25 billion dollars has been expended by federal agencies alone in the improvement of educational programs in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. A recent report to Congress and the President by the National Advisory Council on Education Professions Development indicates a change is occurring by concluding "the emphasis has shifted from the initiation of efforts aimed at bringing about improvements in American education to an interest in determining whether these efforts are achieving their goals." (NACEPD, 1974) The importance of evaluation is being realized at all levels including national, state, and local.

National Emphasis

At the national or federal level, evaluation has been emphasized as far back as the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The Advisory Council for Education Professions Development has been conducting an inquiry into the way federal programs--and state and local programs supported by federal funds--are being evaluated.

Also in their 1974 report, the NACEPD cites four developments which give an indication of the importance attached to evaluation at the national level. The four developments include:

1. Increasingly in new legislation enacted and in amendments to existing statutes, explicit provision for evaluation has been made. The General Accounting Office reports that in the areas of health, education, welfare, economic opportunity, and like federal activities, there are twenty-three Acts in which formal objective evaluation is now prescribed. Some of these statutes have numerous provisions for evaluation.

2. The Executive Branch has been placing increasing emphasis on "cost-effectiveness" as a means for determining whether the results from given Federal programs are in proportion to the money expended. Such a procedure assumes the capacity on the part of the agencies to carry out appropriate and effective evaluation.

3. There has been a very substantial increase in the funds allotted for evaluation in the Executive Branch. The General Accounting Office reports that expenditures for non-defense program evaluation have jumped from $19 million in 1960 to $110 million in 1972.

4. It is clear that before the end of this year the Congress will have instituted some major reforms related to fundamental aspects of its own procedures. We speak of provisions for the establishment of budget ceilings; for machinery which will enable the Congress to set broad areas of priority concern; and for the creation of a Congressional Office of the Budget. The success of these reforms will depend, in no small way, on the capacity of the Congress to evaluate the effectiveness of the program it has legislated--or at least to interpret evaluations conducted by the Executive Branch and to appraise the quality of such evaluations.

Obviously, the concern for evaluation by our nation's leadership has been considerable. But the success of most or many federal evaluations rely on the adequacy of evaluation activity at the state and local level.

State Emphasis

Evaluation efforts at the state level have lagged behind their federal mandates in almost all states. However, some states have realized the need and importance of evaluation and have designed systems for evaluating educational programs. The Illinois Division of Vocational and Technical Education has been a leader in the development and implementation of a statewide evaluation system. Many other states have since initiated evaluation systems and many have relied on the expertise and experience of Illinois personnel.

Local Emphasis

During FY 72 and FY 73, a major finding of Illinois' evaluation system

for the statewide evaluation of occupational programs was that there has existed a serious lack of development and utilization of evaluation procedures at the local level. Almost universally, evaluation reports of visitation teams stressed the need for improvement in both the development and refinement of local evaluation procedures and for increased emphasis on evaluation in pre- and in-service higher education programs. A survey of local evaluation activities in other states has led to a similar finding.

The Illinois composite evaluation reports of both FY 72 and FY 73 (DVTE, 1972 and 1973) emphasized this finding. Example conclusions from this report include:

> Local school personnel need assistance if they are to acquire the techniques and competencies necessary to generate and maintain strategies for systematic evaluation. (FY 72)
>
> Impetus in developing local educational agency (LEA) evaluation systems and using their results is badly needed. (FY 72)
>
> Institutions for professional development have not provided training in conducting locally-directed evaluations. This is evidenced by the lack of formalized systems at the local level. (FY 72)
>
> Data gathered and interviews conducted indicate that very few schools have a locally-directed evaluation system for their occupational program--90% of the schools evaluated were reported to have no locally-directed evaluation system. (FY 73)
>
> Those few LEA's who report having locally-directed evaluation systems make only limited use of the data generated by those systems in planning for their occupational programs. (FY 73)

In response to this need, the Illinois Division of Vocational and Technical Education initiated activity in devising and delivering information and assistance to local school evaluators through the initiation of a developmental project.

Project Goal and Objectives

The goal for the locally-directed evaluation project is to improve educational offerings within local education agencies (LEA's) through more effective use of evaluation procedures. Locally-directed evaluation has been defined as any activity which LEA personnel conduct to aid in planning and decision-making. A more immediate goal of the project was to systemize several of these activities for use by LEA personnel--giving them practical guidelines to the conduct of each form of evaluation they would be likely to encounter. To further delineate the project goal and give direction to the project, five project objectives were formulated:

1. To identify local and state agency needs for evaluative information,
2. To develop a practical strategy for locally-directed evaluation basing it on current theory,
3. To develop practical evaluation activities to be utilized by LEA personnel,
4. To field test the evaluation strategy and activities in selected LEA's, and
5. To design a scheme to disseminate and encourage implementation of locally-directed evaluation activities.

Procedures

Based upon the aforementioned goal and objectives, a project plan was formulated. This plan included a number of procedural steps which are briefly described below.

State and Local Needs Assessment

The actual need for evaluation activity at the local level was vividly portrayed in the year-end report of the state-directed on-site evaluations. However, it was necessary to obtain additional information regarding the

identification of existing activity, the LEA perceived need for evaluation, and the constraints which had deterred evaluation in the past. To aid in the identification of these factors, a needs assessment workshop was held in which thirty practicing educators participated. The participants included superintendents, principals, community college presidents and deans, and local vocational directors. The input of all of these groups was gathered over a two-day period.

An additional concern in the needs assessment was the determination of state agency information needs which could be met by local sources. This determination was accomplished through the contact and interview of staff of the Professional and Curriculum Development Unit, Research and Development Unit, and the Program Approval and Evaluation Unit of the Illinois State Office.

A third aspect of the needs assessment involved a group of fifteen individuals who were team leaders for the state-directed evaluation system. These individuals were assembled for a two-day meeting which has two purposes: 1) to identify local needs, and 2) to begin development of an evaluation strategy. The first purpose was met by dividing the group in half and asking each group to answer the following questions for each of eight program areas:

1. To what extent does evaluation happen now?
2. What would be ideal evaluation practices?
3. What are the limits and constraints to reaching the ideal?
4. What are suggested means for overcoming the discrepancy between current and ideal evaluation practices, in light of these constraints?

The second purpose, the initial attempt to develop an evaluation strategy

or framework for local agency use, was accomplished by utilizing the same two groups in an advocate team approach. The two teams were directed to develop competing strategies for locally-directed evaluation. A written and oral charge was made to the teams with specific boundaries or guidelines to be followed.

Review of Evaluation Literature

An extensive review of the literature was conducted to identify both theoretical models of evaluation and practical applications in local education agencies. A computer search of the ERIC system and the Current Index to Journals in Education was made. In addition, convention and conference papers dealing with evaluation were obtained for the most recent two-year period. Many fragmented or individual evaluation activities were identified through this review such as student follow-up surveys, cost analysis, etc. However, few were presented in a practically implementable format and fewer were presented in the form of a system. In addition, many were very specifically focused in individual "title" projects and little attention was given to the generalizability of activities to other educational endeavors.

Compilation of List of Evaluation Activities

A synthesis of the local leader needs assessment, the findings and suggestions of evaluation team leaders, and the review of evaluation literature resulted in a tentative listing of thirty-eight evaluation activities. This listing incorporated four segments: (1) activity title, (2) information source, (3) technique, and (4) purpose. An example entry of this listing is presented below.

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Activity Title	Information Source	Techniques	Purpose
The Employer Survey	Employers of former students	Mail survey Personal interview Telephone interview	Determine performance of former students Assess competency or objective lists Elicit employer recommendations Estimate supply and demand Determine recruitment practices Aid public relations

This activity listing was later used in formulating a strategy or structure for locally-directed evaluation and in the later prioritization of activities to aid in development decision making.

Formulation of a Structure for Locally-Directed Evaluation

As indicated previously, the literature review included the review of evaluation models and conceptual frameworks. One of these models, the CIPP model, was identified as being most appropriate to meeting the needs of the LEA's and to the facilitation of an on-going or continuous evaluation effort. Also, it was thought, the CIPP model could be utilized with any program, regardless of its phase of development or implementation.

Even though the CIPP model was utilized, it was determined not to describe and define the model to LEA personnel as Stufflebeam, et al. might have suggested. Instead, the components of the CIPP model were defined in the form of questions:

Context Evaluation:	Where are you? Where are you going?
Input Evaluation:	How will you get there?
Process Evaluation:	How are you doing in getting there?
Product Evaluation:	Have you made it?

The planned evaluation activity, "The Employer Survey," was easily derived from one of the CIPP-related evaluation questions; this activity was clearly a form of product evaluation. Projected activities pertaining to context evaluation included: a job need survey, assessment of community and school resources, a student interest survey. Similarly, example activities for process evaluation included: the survey of current students, team review, and staff evaluation. Input evaluation included activities such as cost analysis, and team review of alternatives.

Development of an Introductory Activity

The next step in the development of the locally-directed evaluation project was the development of an introductory activity. It was felt that the development of such an activity would provide local personnel with a concise introduction to the structure for locally-directed evaluation.

The introductory slide/tape gave a quick introduction to the CIPP theoretical model--although it did not, for previously mentioned reasons, mention this model by name. This introductory activity in the form of a local leader guide and a slide/tape presentation did introduce the viewer to the basic questions associated with the respective stages of the CIPP model. Although it did not list all possible activities (a number of these were not yet determined), it suggested activities to correspond to each question.

The introductory slide/tape was accompanied by a set of materials which would be distributed to selected personnel within each LEA. The materials included: a local leader guide, a consultant guide, and a catalog of evaluation activities.

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The local leader guide that accompanies the slide/tape presentation provided a set of specific procedures, sample forms or documents, a written copy of the script, and included reproduced copies of the slides themselves. This companion was compiled to provide local leaders and others with a quick reference to the areas of the slide/tape which they felt the need to review.

Develop a Prototype Activity

Concurrent with the development of the introductory activity, an activity entitled, "The Employer Survey," was developed. It was intended

that this activity serve as a prototype to be subjected to close scrutiny. It was hoped that this activity would allow LEA personnel to react to the format and method of dissemination to be utilized as well as clarify, by example, some of the material presented in the introductory activity. The prototype activity, like the introductory activity, consisted of a slide/tape presentation augmented by a printed local leader guide, consultant guide entry and catalog entry.

Establishment of an Administrative Advisory Committee

A group of eleven LEA chief school administrators was formed to aid the project staff by reacting to and making suggestions regarding project activities. The two prototype activities were submitted to the group for their consideration. This group was also asked to field test the two "prototype" activities in their own local agency. To achieve a balance in the final product that would guarantee its usefulness in all Illinois schools, the team was composed of administrators from schools ranging in size and geographical area. The administrators were cautioned not to accept the decision to develop slide/tape presentations and accompanying documents as final for the entire series of activities. They were encouraged to criticize and renovate the activities--and to suggest that the project be terminated if they found it seriously wanting or unnecessary.

As a result of the meeting of the advisory committee, the project was continued and the development of two more prototype activities was initiated. The administrators were in agreement concerning several important recommendations for the future conduct of the project. The administrators were satisfied with the basic format of the evaluation activities, and recommended that the locally-directed evaluation project continue in the format in which

it was designed. The group further agreed to participate during the remainder of the 73-74 school year to the extent possible; after this initial experience it was felt a decision could be reached as to their continued participation during the 1974-75 school year. Participation during 73-74 meant agreement to pilot test the activity, "The Development of a Locally-Directed Evaluation Plan," with the assistance of project staff. Administrators were also committed to participation in a meeting to determine the course of development for future slide/tape presentations.

Field Test of Prototypes and Activities

Field testing occurred in two phases. The first phase included the testing of the introductory and employer survey activities and the overall format of activities, while the second phase was focused on the testing and refinement of the activities described in the following section.

Upon completion of the two prototype activities a field test was planned in those LEA's wishing to participate. Schools wishing to participate were given both freedom and encouragement to apply the evaluation activities to their specific situations. If a school wished to employ one activity in one department and desired that another activity be conducted or applied district-wide, it was felt that this would work to increase the utility of the field test.

It was the desire of one chief school administrator that one occupationally oriented activity be altered by the school and applied to evaluation of academic programs. This, too, was encouraged as the project staff felt that their role was to aid local districts in evaluation--not to promote the activity itself.

Identification of Needed Activities

Based on the testing of the introductory activity and the resulting evaluation plans made up by local schools, a set of priorities was determined for the development of future activities. Schools were given a set of possible activities--activities which it was planned would be developed if the necessity of development was confirmed by the school personnel. From this list, they put together an evaluation plan for the institution or district. Educators were encouraged to suggest additional activities which would fit their needs. The project staff then drew up a schedule for development of activities that would put the desired activity in the hands of each district within the smallest time period possible.

Development of Activities

To insure quality and to minimize the time necessary to develop activities designated as high priority, development consultants were identified with expertise in areas relating to the planned activities. In this way several activities could be developed at one time. Consultants were first briefed at an orientation meeting. During this meeting, they were shown prototype activities to familiarize them with the considerations unique to the slide/tape medium. At this time the group was also given more personal guidelines and more specific advice on activity development.

To insure uniformity in quality and format, the consultants were asked to complete their task in two stages. The first stage involved the outline of material to be presented within the slide/tape presentation and the local leader guide; this outline was reviewed by the project staff. If material submitted was too complex, too elementary, to simply irrelevant, consultants were asked to revise the outline. Once preliminary outlines

were approved, consultants were free to complete the second stage--the actual development of a slide/tape script and related documents. Slide/tape scripts were again reviewed, edited or revised by project staff and forwarded to commercial production consultants. Artwork and narration was completed and slide/tapes were once more reviewed and revised, if necessary, prior to duplication for dissemination to the LEA's.

Design a Dissemination Scheme

The field test experience of the project staff not only led to the refinement of individual evaluation activities, but also helped to illuminate the constraints and limitations faced by local school personnel in terms of implementing evaluation activities. Better understanding of these constraints led to the development of a flexible scheme for implementing the outcomes of the locally-directed evaluation project.

Basically, the dissemination plan incorporates means by which individual activities may be handled: 1) independently and without outside assistance, 2) with the aid of a state department consultant, or 3) with the aid of a privately contracted consultant. To aid consultants, when the consultant approach is chosen, specific guidelines were formulated by project staff. These guidelines provide assistance to the consultant in introducing the activities to local staff, acting as a resource person in planning, reacting to LEA progress and instrumentation, and aiding the LEA personnel in utilizing the results of the activities.

Outcome of Project

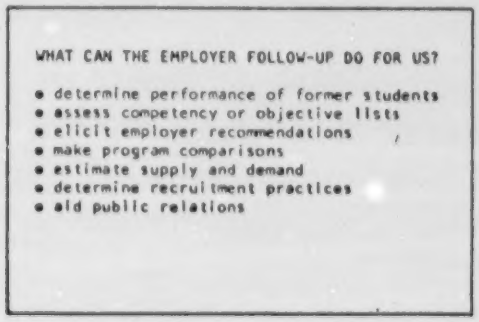
The outcomes of the locally-directed evaluation project will comprise a series of evaluation activities and related documents which have been designed to help achieve the project goal. Each of the planned evaluation activities in this series follows a similar format. That is, each activity

which is designed to aid the local leader and his staff in doing evaluation will include a slide/tape presentation, a local leader guide, a consultant guide, and an entry in a catalog of evaluation activities.

Slide/Tape Presentations

A slide/tape presentation has been or will be developed to accompany each evaluation activity. The first activity, "An Introduction to Locally-Directed Evaluation," was described in a previous section. This introductory activity was designed to dispell some of the misconceptions of evaluation which have been held by educators and to orient local school personnel to the concepts related to locally-directed evaluation. An additional objective of this introductory activity was to facilitate the development of a local evaluation plan for each LEA. LEA plans are meant to reflect the concerns and problems of LEA personnel and allows for the selection and sequencing of evaluation activities which can be utilized to better understand the concerns and help overcome the identified problems.

The slide/tape presentations which accompany all other activities are more instructional and more directive with regard to subtasks which must be accomplished. The presentations begin with a listing and discussion of the reasons for conducting the specific activity. For example, in the activity entitled, "The Employer Follow-up Survey," purposes or reasons for conducting the activity include:


WHAT CAN THE EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP DO FOR US?
• determine performance of former students
• assess competency or objective lists
• elicit employer recommendations
• make program comparisons
• estimate supply and demand
• determine recruitment practices
• aid public relations

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Purposes such as these are then discussed and the methodological considerations of the activity are addressed. Specific attention is paid to identifying tasks which must be completed and the offering of suggestions and directions for task achievement. The slide/tape presentations are concluded with suggestions for utilizing the obtained results in meeting the needs of the LEA.

Local Leader Guides

A printed booklet accompanies each slide/tape presentation. This booklet is designed to augment the audio-visual presentation for the local leader. The first part of each booklet contains a set of procedures which the local leader should follow in the planning, initiation, implementation and follow-up of the activity. When feasible, procedures are subdivided into subtasks and suggestions are given relative to the division of labor for the LEA staff. For example, suggestions are given as to what types of individuals should be responsible for instrument development for the employer survey.

A second section of the local leader guides includes copies of previously developed instruments, letters and guides which might aid the local leader in completing the evaluation activity. These appended documents are not intended to be used verbatim in most cases but instead are presented as examples or documents which can be adapted to the specific needs of the LEA.

The last segment of each local leader guide contains a printed photograph of each slide used in the slide/tape presentation and the tape script is also provided. This material is included for reference purposes and to avoid having to review the entire slide/tape to gain clarification of a point which may be needed.

Consultant Guide

The document referred to as the consultant guide has the purpose of giving specific procedures for a private or state office consultant to follow in facilitating the evaluation activities within LEA's. An LEA within the state may request that a consultant be sent to work with the local leader in planning an activity and orienting the entire staff to the activity. This task is usually complemented by the slide/tape presentation. Following the orientation of staff and the initial planning phase, the consultant serves as a resource person, reacting to locally produced documents and procedures. This last responsibility may continue over an extensive period of time. The consultants guide contains information useful to the consultant in his facilitative role.

Catalog of Evaluation Activities

A catalog of activities represents yet another document related to locally-directed evaluation. This catalog possesses an entry for each activity and somewhat parallels a college catalog. For each activity, the following items are included: activity title, general activity purpose, activity goals, prerequisite activities, required materials and estimated time requirements.

All of the materials mentioned in this section have been developed to aid the leaders within LEA's to conduct evaluation activities. The material along with the consultative assistance are by no means externally imposed by the state education agency--they are strictly for locally-planned purposes.

Completion of 18 activities is planned for early fall of this year; while the field testing is schedules to be complete by the end of the 1974-75 school year. The original focus of the locally-directed evaluation pro-

ject was on programs of career education. However, as project activities have progressed, especially field testing, it has been learned that the activities can easily be adapted to all areas of educational programs. Plans to disseminate the project outcomes on a nationwide basis through a commercial publisher have not been completed but hopefully in the near future these plans can be made.